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ZOOXANTHELLAE

By

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Bachelor of Arts, Hampshire College, Amherst, Massachusetts, 1993

Thesis

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

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in Creative Writing, Option

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For my mother and father

Zooxanthellae are single-celled plants or algae that live symbiotically in the gastrodermis of reef-building corals

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An echolator's sense of space

WHERE WE CAME FROM, WHAT WE DID

I fell out of
a door key under
unbroken clouds
into a still storm

(shoes at the end of
the hall, tongues cracked)

pinned, listing you
emerged from a puddle of
wax (brittle tendrils drew
you out)

floating in the air
from the strands of
skin, moated we made
a collage

and cataloged animals,
habits of

MY HOUSE IS HARD TO FIND

When you walk in there may be a tone. It is not ambient but much fuller. You may experience a tone deafness to objects. It is not soft. That which is not soft is inverted, can be writhing, never with form. It is a sliding you feel on your stomach that presses hard, not as hard as the floor but very much harder. The edges of things dropping off is sudden and longer than a sill. It is not known where they go. No portal, a place you cannot find, a place you find by diving headfirst into a trunk. There can be no splinters (strands of stilled thread passed between thumb and finger in a line). A bootstrap. It is apparent that something has gone awry. The bootstrap not forthcoming.

SLEEPING

after Italo Calvino

The leaves falling to the ground were collecting,
forming themselves into puddles full of sesame seeds,
letters, thieves making off with the fruit, would be nuns,
crafting the most delicate animal and vegetable jewelry,
passengers on rudimentary Asian buses, devouring
the landscape as they passed through. Everything but words.
All the while, you were asleep, tied to a limb,
your feet wrapped in burlap sacking, buried in the ground.

TO WAKE UP IN A ROOM OF MOSS COATED OBJECTS

the softing stone of day
comes to undulate the body through, suppose a carpet of wool,
suppose the air currenting between limbs, suppose there being
little or no cohesion of a body between one step and another

continually a solid form will insinuate itself underfoot
immediately, as the foot evacuates the space of contact
shape melts away, a ceaseless discharge

in the violet zone of evening there is a whirring that nourishes separation
the shock of distinction felt in every pore of mineral tissue
chalky sound of voices, as through water, dusks in the ear
the strobe lit sky foams and buckles

that one single day should pass in which everything is not consumed

ALBEDO

We always drown the town, then
say: *you encroach* Psychrophyllic
top-dwellers, we see the sickle-shaped
curve of the borehole, but do not
believe in the heat flux at the core of it.

You list, a drunken tree and
give way to a drunken forest,
you riffled rooftops threaded
to the thermokarst. The signal
was very small, compared to
noise. You felt it first.

We have come to a place a few block beyond erratic. We write
protocalls for the floe. We wait for the chambered brine
to make its way through the frozen *albedo*. We lick it
and sing the birthday song.

ROUTINE

Some days, the clouds are low. Isolated, thick masses so present they seem palpable, or smooth, linear, and flowing laterally, we gradually take shape as their stream passes over. We come upon a muddy stretch of ground exposed by the tide, slews of aquatic leaves, still green, large, and in shape remind us of the splayed webbed digits of some amphibian - mired and parched. We realize we have come too far and turn back, choosing a different path. On the shore of the saline lake, we dismantle our theodolites and search for the salient poles within. Febrile, our pulses thready: it is time to share the kumquat. We survey the water as we eat. The glassine surface perforated by a legion of tufa towers stemming from below. Wading in with our sickles and swales we carve a vast mineral topiary. You, softly: still freshly rumpled and yet cohesive. I: they have begun to deaden, from their stems and at their cores.

LACUNA

the body is limp, inert. it goes clinical
taste of white form through the clear
plucking olives from the peel.
winter runs through the leafing, outer
cuttings file in. how many basket shapes,
types of glass, witness infolding, preserve
such clinging. sense of ripened leather:
find a smaller brush. instances of grass
under the bed. all I see is a stilted bridge
and a list of names. wooden plaques leering
from divides, as through water, underlings.
dials meddling with the lighting, mistaking
pollen for strands of skin. comes a sheaf of
forecasts, pill-dusted, eyed to the quick. I feel
the way through plank and bulb by scent, am
haunted by fiber and filament. a shroud is
buried in the garden.

LAPSUS LINGUAE

Interior walls canvassing frozen waves of sand - dark pudding walls halting silky
residue - sinuous lines cresting on uncertain dusk - inverted bed of a prismatic spring

formed in a nutritive amount of cold: this house echoes the sound of only the heaviest
bells, reflects theories of undulating light in the faces of reluctant ambassadors from

animal and vegetable kingdoms. What lies here came flapping furiously, as tracing the
oscillations of a wild duck in flight. Come here when you are beyond papers, have flown

directly into the horse's eyes to no avail, can be contained only by bones. I came when
there was no dark glass at hand, the matter of milk felt about the head in a field wider
than myself.

ON AIDS TO EXPLORATION

We plot it out by stones and pebble through
the gault, the slow take-truths, only relics
of the former animate. Do seeds of ordinary
rivers always plunge such valley-cradles ingot-
like, mind-resistant? You found some tiny
shells on an alpine mountain top and still
denied the first diluvian theory. Alluring fables
of small and perfect white whorls falling from
the hats of pilgrims did not divert your cause.
When people lived on salt-meat during winter
powdered pinches staid them through. *Portalani*
outlined some approach to the bays, islands and
headlands, but could not speak to vast, adjacent
waters. Though we are crude forms, we can
balance on a pivot with murky vision and on
starless nights for so long.

BIOTICA

They are not responding to our tones –
the interval of time
in which the earth rotates
on its axis, for instance, they had suggested
is node-like,
its own movement not seen

but for the skin that snakes over
as it moves along beneath – we
are drawn to sidereal
time and the kind of symbol clocks that
seem to regulate the way
the light falls angularly across the lips
of the rooftops spanning their own
irregular squares- and still,

the far-off sentinels guarding
the outposts of our
systems
have abandoned their stations

leaving word that they will go in search
of their own slow and tranquil causes
tracing the currents which floated
those now
subterranean masses
through time, across the sandy, vast
plains of Tartary
leaving a fissure
in their wake –
the hyperbola
of our hopeless paths.

REGRESSION

I.

what foraminiferan perspective, it pandemic sweep

wrinkling attention sidelong, the marling of once-thought reef (dwellers)
or clandestine features of

 this whaleflung stupor curdles the air as it sweeps
through the bellows

an echolator's sense of space mapped onto which of their own:

onesuch we rigid forms, we collapse under the specificity of our own particularity

in an otherwise bosky, if distinguishable, cellspeckled worth
all emulate the dimmest sense, at-once ablur at: once-ablur

such doleful seeking characterizes the ablation zone

it's the trickle-down of everything to an obsolete shell

II.

who swept the tidal remnants onto old gummed bits of winter (we further wring,
oust that which could preserved for dimmer seasons)

aspiring wiry limbs flank each vessel, each plank, but do not venture out to forage

in the torrid zone, each type of wind is honeyed with resin, carries its own flaked utterance over, into

III.

in the bone-luck sequel to our stainless apocalypse

we are synonymous with the certain untraceable life forms
convert fields of truncated longing and navigate the stop-gap
into paler realms of thought, movement

we curtain the saplings and propose: if we make it slow
the lime conference considers

DISTILLATE

what, no ache of breath or streaming
tissue,

 fiddling acres of hand-strewn
blades, my riverine windows glaze:

noseprint, noseprint, noseprint fever

waddle home (arcs of the graph) into
puckered flakes of red under cycle

 whatever lakes are listening: conceal
your tongues into wickered spaces

one slippered foot beckons the wolves
to gleam,

 the other wrestles none that
follow into skeins of treeful (reaching)–

streets brimmed by spooned pot lids
jelly the once-nooked light

 that turtles
into morning unspun

helmeted into some certain tawny,
needles convey the pounding matter

eye for weight,

 scrawled in the folds
echoed into viscous grey

 each harried
strand, each webbed thought splays

a whispered branch
 into a space more
and less a plate bedded on
 soon enough

resin

 then a syrup, the structure betrays
its secret again

UNCERTAIN DISTANCE

I am trying to get just to the edge of the field that lies
at the back of my throat. Constant echoes blue the way.
Angled particles of night for instance, are spilling out of the pocket
where the hem of your trousers came yesterday loose
somewhere closer, I felt, to the equator where
you set loose a breath that entered an ocean current
and uncuffed a sense of focus figging the Eastern dawn.
Therefore my view of the canal snaking through
the cold and still city unhinged the floor below my feet.
Though an unblinking pole offered up its orangeness,
the canal-side structures yielded their transparency
and I could not stop falling up against, into.

BRITTLE CORAL

of a defunct reef
giving way to
the
blooming surge-

spindle cracked note, the muffled last,
last form the sea would
call a body
other than its own.
Diatomic echolite
to the drum, tiny trans-
channeled grain:

your little island grows. Will we
wash over its cause?

I am at bay here, I will always wait to leave.

Zooxanthellae

1.

The cyclonic blur of the world
is measured with the fixed edges of form.

The memory of a cat may not stretch
beyond the borders of the territory it patrols.
Even for a place it long occupied
particular sills and tufts.
Familiarity lives
in the juice of muscles.

When she finished sifting the dune grains,
they were lined up and counted.

Too many legs and plottable eyes
signal vast seas of strangeness.
She glued them to blocks of wood.
There is the kind of story which can be told
and the other sort which can only be lived
in the mind, the difference being
that which can be placed
in a physical box.

2.

That a certain amount of the story
can be washed off, like the arced

crust of sleep fringing ones eyelashes,
relates more closely to the act of cooking
than the taste of what has been cooked.

As long as there is a physical object
which can be broken or lost,
you can fashion a dimensional plate
out of the fragments, the vapor trail,
which can be hung on an interior wall.

For example, several small, white clusters of berries are an aberration, vacuums clinging
to final fingers.

We will always find a name, Goose Feather, or Dermal Pucker, and then it becomes
possible to pierce.

The needle pierces through skin, but can also pin down any type or color of blood.

3.

Some days ago,
several hundred thousand or so
you may have taken a walk.
Whether or not you had a place
in mind to go, we could find
a medium. Let's choose skin.
There is a real map to be found.
We can use imagination
or diligence. It already exists.

The point is not the wind. We are all several winds.

We become such like she did
fourteen years ago in the alley lot
between Market and Walnut Streets.
As the tires of her bike passed over
the fallen bush berries, dark and puckered,
their skins split releasing fermented ripeness
into the still air dense with water.

The wind was not the weather.

They, she and the berries, became unpinable, spanless.

A moment can snap apart from itself just like that.

Bird luck

MINING

spiraling down a path between two horizons
breath narrowed into the dark forms
by which we were descending —

the sense of movement absorbed through a bone-twittering transference
inducing locomotor ataxia in the end-fathom.

down here, conditions favor largeness
and the expansion of orchitic liquid in nodal pockets.

our mouths are as beaks, ante chambers of possibility
inducing us to abandon our boney holdfasts,
to dissipate and crystallize on the humming strands.

the glittering grey dust underfoot is vibrating: particles gliding along
certain planes into new positions of equilibrium.

our milky eyes pigeon the vaulted walls, impregnated with three hundred years of
sweat. the primitive ambiguity preserved. how we are enfolded.

PURGATORY FURNACE

The Arc

When there is the task of fashioning
a shoe for a small and delicate shell the form
is better sought in a darkness that is
cold. Find the curve with slicked tips
and fix it there. This is the way you have before
soothed the bees and made them small
and slow. Also, do not forget: each
coal is a slightly rounded, edged rock
peering into a vivid humming, trading its
blackness and form for a texture
silky and still.

The Taper

This is the opposite of tongue to nape
or lip to lobe. You must wait for a warm
thick day - the night should be moonless.
Now the air will make the fixing, a film
of lampblack to your arms where the hair
no longer grows, and you will see how
smooth your limb through the soot
glows, know that it is lit from within
by its own pulsing and you will look to
see if there is someone waiting
to stitch it to the sky.

SEA, FLAKED

What the bark does not exude might be
found in a knicking: the liquid of a
salt air fir rooted in sandy soil,
piercing
through ever denser rings: a give near the
core taps an inner channel, stony bleats
rising from this goat-scumbled squall
mound are licked up by flaps - snaps of
planed-out whorls which the night has
spiraled through and emerged from,
speckled and tinged and verging
to whorl again, while below four
needling a finner right up to the eye
the cobbly way to this frame, the spume
shattering off its roof, the pitch of their roll
and the pitch from the tare, are you,
in the pucker of that wave, a woolly filament
sucked coursing into the heart sap.

CRAB LIGHT

Embayed on the rim
of a land shelf in a zone of
 submergence, sloping you slip from
the ponded plate's edge through neritic realms,

through clouds of glassfish in the shallows,
come to lay on anemonical carpeting:
 turbulent clouds of
cold, green water pass over certain reefs

in your mind, current sweeps through, and you
 filter-fed, surge in the wave, phosphoresce
as the blue glowers in the caverns at night – you
 the finlight

 swarms of tendrils and a kind of wind
that moves them, have forgotten to disclose that slowly
 below, something is drawing
down to greater depth.

You are reminded though, by a slender tactile
process on the lips of certain fishes and a sudden
 protistan rainfall that here, buoyancy is not equal, and
surface to the waxlight

sifting through fine sand of shelly bones
 and recrystallize, reflect the internal
architecture of the local organisms
 whorling out of plane in several chambers,

involute. Boreal subject
in a palaeotropical kingdom
 back in the northern drylight
stilling against the drag shortened

and thickened your hinges, lengthened and thinned your
limbs: the friction masked as movement, the
 movement only relative.
Drag slip.

Now slip-strike through the crab light (level-driven) with
no plans to chart the fetch over vast
aphotic realms - move sinistrally - when you
arrive

we slip fold *lit-par-lit* across the boundaries of
several unexplored faunal provinces.

THE GLASS IN THE WINDOWS

is never
not moving. It has always been
contained within the pane frames.
When you come,
one or more may not hold its eddies.

As you advance, the long cold slope of you
moving above the sinews, taking place
in the wake of the recurvature of the storm, is suspended
there in the plane of that arc. A wet bulb flickering
below, head cocked, ice-blinks at your bevel.
In the growing shadow of your contour
lashes crumble, close in.

A garden of gleaming forks, shoulder-high
are rooted, not depending on the consistency of the soil
but spaced at intervals linked to internal architecture,
Four tines crowning each pierce through the seeing-
sense etched onto smoothed coarse grains.

Through the ball of such sensing
on the pitch of this slope
flue lapses in the blink.

I cannot tell you what from inside will enter
the flow. If there is a way in
it will be with a rush sensed.
Footing, come unloosed –
night-blooming noises will rumble you in.

ENTER THE CITY FULL OF CHINA CUP SAUCERS

and irreplaceable rain. Burring a well-phantomed path
an inky mist sustains you, the trace of your cadence
and gait interlacing the cobbles; they swell
and taper in the wake. Encountering knots
and burls as you surge, you notice that many you pass
seem be retracing a private history of oceans, waving
stones their own families have waved and lacquered
before. Lane by road, you wonder how many years
it took for the great spherical gas cloud to unwind.
The buildings, malculatures of a former world
an acid had spilled into, attacking the collapsed
etching ground indiscriminately. They suggest
the power of spontaneous movement,
but you sense that motion is a webbed thing,
that the walls of the structures here cannot contain
the fruiting bodies within: they are stinging the wires
again. How in am I, you ask, how am I in.

SONG FOR A LAMPLIGHTER

Jupiter stands grove the rounds as you follow
wending halls – the under surfaces of the slabs

bed and lap, aired through by tail, fixed at the head.
You weigh the wind-worth and gauge its rainforce to seep

the battens, how liable the slate, the various pitches,
whether inlets arrange the eaves. Heavy beading flaps

your coefficient for expansion, the manner of laying
rolls and drips. Your mouth-gowned cloak claws to ear

and the tileclaps, liveloads protected by the wire-wove glass
glazing the pale-sprayed cobbles puddled beneath

your night-rutched thoughts. Felt and thatch, torch and snuff;
as if there were moonlight in a dark place.

FRUIT WEATHER

It was like a sponge of velvet, saturated, softer than
velvet, more vivid, plum flesh: pockets of air unfurled into

our laps and some sifted down into the warm, cool dirt
of the fields passing through peaches in the form of melons
as it sunk. We what drifted among the pockets

were at times as ships made of unconnected objects or
caverns of submarine thought, where sulfur vents bloom
fiercely streaking the lampblack mango.

Beyond, glycerine days dissolved
into an array of fences, shutters, line strung slack the
difference between blue and gold then frayed, stark again.

There are angels in love, the angels
which love like the first love will save
the burden of having no one there.

A stream waits through the rule of your eyes.
That your face is an optical stream
in my memory, I am relieved.

A HUMAN HEAD WITH A HUMAN FACE

I am trying to remember your face, its frosty
geometry and crystal space-lattice, your eolian features.
I try to map it, as a cordillera, in relief, and watch broad
continuous sheets of water wash over it. There
are deep-scattering layers, I remember, that radiate
echoes of your interior fauna. Capillaries fringe
your felsic cheeks, I say, dendritic patterns
branching your forehead. But saying is not seeing.

A journal once published an article on a feat
of facial memory by a New York hotel porter.
With the hats of five hundred arranged
in no particular order, the porter
could select the right one for each guest
without a moment's hesitation. But these
were strangers to him. He could
stitch their faces to their hats without
the burden of having known them.

A dunlin wades through the milk of your eyes.
That your face is an ephemeral stream
in my memory, I am relieved.

BIRD LUCK

She appoints a dormer eave the third station.
In the hunting respite particles of chatter are swallowed up
by particles of night, quick as they lapse.
A window is left waiting for the next.
A window betrays the deep luster of looking.

While smaller birds affix a thread to triangulate
their own latched conversations,
she compares the arrangements of furniture
from without and within.
Book nook. Bedroom isle.
Only so many yawns escape
while everything that floats in the air
eventually finds its way to blood.

The biggest eyes she ever cupped were found with instinctual math.
If there were feathers that would be a symptom and not a sign.
Inside the house they would become Kitchen Island, Walnut Veneer,
Backsplash. A moth-balled spell on a room.
Even our clothes remain strange to us.

IN TANGLED INTERIOR FORUMS

several distinctive weather systems
carpeting organs as lichen,
have registered disturbances.

I am hatching out into the story
of your tissues and bones.

A smaller body would bind itself
to luminous abandonment
and drift from the boreals
to the doldrums in tones emitted
as sand passes underfoot.

If these hives would unconstellate
for the scent of a new moss.

I pass by every unfolded bed
and glint signals of pulsing
in pinks and blues. I ink
onto satellites with boiling bays
outstretched.

AT THE SANTA LUCIA HIGHLANDS COURT BALL

when we met, I still in the stony-take
throes of accretion, you rapt in the grainy
phenomenon of disintegration. That night
as the bird squawks attempted to penetrate
the canopy we looked at each other and
said: *imagine us*. From then on,
we began to trace, in reverse
the various paths of least resistance
worn by the oldest river in the world –
the germs of a perfect system (we said)
the cities a single undistinguishable
cloud can carry (we secretly feared).

Later, I became a deep bay opening
into the land like a funnel: you appeared
as an ivory ball hanging from a nail
by a silk thread. Spontaneously,
we enhanced the value of our body's own
lost energy, allowing for the collapse
of masses toward their central parts.
We vowed to speak to each other
in slow, barely audible tones, through
time, through processes enacted
upon us. Pure minerals
that we've become.